

8. UFO Consciousness and Portals to Cosmic Awareness

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This chapter provides an overview of modes of consciousness experienced by people who believe that they have been contacted by extra-terrestrial entities. Although these experiences are widely varied there are two primary modes of experience: forced contact (abduction) and dialogic contact (channelled messages or physical manifestations). These can range from a single isolated event to decades of sustained interaction. Although it is not exclusively the case, forced contact tends to take the form of singular events whilst dialogic contact tends to be ongoing. Although there are accounts of dialogic contact in which the contactee claims to have been physically visited by alien entities¹ the prevailing norm is for this kind of contact to be a message conveyed by a fully realised alien mind – either that of an individual entity or a gestalt consciousness. Each will be discussed with the seminal abductee account provided by Betty and Barney Hill providing a focus for discussion of the abduction scenario whilst the current work of entity channel Lyssa Royal Holt will provide an extended case study of the extent to which states of altered consciousness have relevance to channelling.²

These formative contact experiences that have shaped the discourse of alien contact can be organised in a dichotomous and opposing system: benevolent ‘space brothers’ and malign, invasive abductions. In the instance of the former, two contrasting forms emerge: the mental projection of alien intelligence to human receivers, their channels, and a direct, physical visitation. The focus of this chapter is the theme of self-transcendence in the experience of UFO channels. In Lyssa Royal Holt’s written and spoken material the self-transcendence attained through alien contact promises humanity the ‘collective salvation’ that Wessinger attributes to millennialism.³

It should be made clear that discussion of the experiences of contactees does not imply a simple acceptance of the claims that are being made. Whilst, at times, the case studies may be related from an emic perspective, my stance is an etic one but in order to enhance the readability of this chapter the decision has been made not to qualify every statement of belief or experience with the phrase ‘claims to have’ or similar. The contested nature of the objectivity of these experiences is referred to from time to time but what is far more important is to ensure that the mental worlds, constructs and

terms of reference of the contactees are treated with an eye for accuracy and fairness. They will be analysed from a perspective that seeks to situate their experiences in a framework that links them to the wider social and cultural context of their particular historical moment. **The treatment of the testaments of the contactees is inspired by the words of E.P. Thompson in the preface to *The Making of the English Working Class* (1963):**

I am seeking to rescue the poor stockinger, the Luddite cropper, the 'obsolete' hand loom weaver, the 'utopian' artisan, and even the deluded follower of Joanna Southcott, from the enormous condescension of posterity. Their crafts and traditions may have been dying. Their hostility to the new industrialism may have been backward-looking. Their communitarian ideas may have been fantasies. Their insurrectionary conspiracies may have been foolhardy. But they lived through these times of acute social disturbance, and we did not. Their aspirations were valid in terms of their own experience.⁴

Similarly, the aim here is not to 'rescue' the contactees but to record their experiences as one set of responses to current concerns and emergent but not-yet fully grasped aspects of humanity as a technologically realised animal.

The narrative of humans claiming contact with nonhuman intelligence is long and, arguably, begins with the complex and contested history of shamanism and the traditions **it** has been applied to since.⁵ Nonetheless, I believe a distinction can be made between earlier forms **of contact** and those that have occurred in modern, secularised societies, especially those accounts that have come in the wake of the post-World War II 'space race' and the objective fact of physical human exploration beyond Earth's atmosphere.⁶ Certainly, George Adamski and Kenneth Arnold⁷ predate the space race but the idea of space travel was more or less culturally embedded by then through science fiction, comic books and film serials, such as the Flash Gordon series. Whilst Arnold was a 'reliable witness' of unidentified flying objects, Adamski presents a more useful and pertinent point of reference in the context of this chapter as he encapsulates the coming together of what Geppert characterises as 'astroculture' and spiritual consciousness.⁸ Altered states have been the foundation of modern UFO contact for most – but not all – experiencers.

George Adamski's claim to have experienced a direct, physical encounter with an alien provides a seminal instance of physical visitation. Following a series of UFO

sightings, he claimed to have communicated with a 'Nordic' Venusian called Orthon in the Colorado Desert in November 1952.⁹ Orthon's message was a warning of impending doom should humanity continue experimentation with nuclear weapons; the contact is typically benign and contactees come away from their encounter with a warning for humanity to mend its ways or face catastrophic consequences. These prophetic messages from higher intelligences predate the UFO phenomenon and take many forms in religious and esoteric traditions. Adamski was not only aware of this but situated his visitation by Orthon in a tradition of spiritual contact by ascended masters associated with the Theosophical Society. Christopher Partridge has provided a detailed study of the incorporation of ascended masters into post-World War II Theosophy and the influence of Theosophy on Adamski's understanding of his experience.¹⁰ Partridge draws attention to the incorporation of technological themes into the spiritual millennium that are accentuated in Adamski's adaption of Theosophy.¹¹

Adamski's prophetic message warned of the risk of nuclear annihilation if humankind failed to develop spiritual wisdom at the same rate as its technological development. These warnings are, effectively, millennialist and promise utopian joy should humanity achieve the required spiritual evolution. This is commonplace in the messages relayed by many subsequent contactees and channels, such as Lyssa Royal Holt, and while some have threatened apocalypse the majority are **uniformly** concerned with a **millennialist transformation in human consciousness into an** awareness of humanity's destiny to become a species at home in the cosmos. In the case of Holt, this is an eschatological transformation of consciousness in which individuals progressively surrender their unique consciousness to a single, amalgamated consciousness. This is reminiscent of the model of the evolution of consciousness described in Theosophy. In Holt, the influence is unacknowledged, so embedded is the concept in New Age-influenced spiritual formations, but in Adamski's account the influence is evident.

Multiple other contactees followed in Adamski's wake with tales of contact – and travel – with the 'space brothers'. Among these were George King, a taxi driver living in Maida Vale, London. He received contact from 'Mars Sector Six' in the form of a voice he heard whilst washing his dishes at the kitchen sink during 1954. Although King did not receive the same kind of physical visitation that Adamski did his message was broadly comparable and owed much of its structure and message to the same Theosophical roots.¹² Whilst Adamski's daughter and other followers formed the George Adamski

Foundation to maintain Adamski's message following his death, King founded a religious organisation based on the messages **he claimed to receive** from the cosmic masters who **he claimed** communicated with him.¹³ Named after his primary contact, the Aetherius Society has survived King's death and continues to spread King's work and to meet for the purpose of focussing positive energies to counter current challenges. Under King's tutelage, the Aetherius Society developed into a structured and consistent religious movement; King was undoubtedly the charismatic leader around which it was organised and within its teachings he alone possessed a mind that was sufficiently evolved to receive the message of the cosmic masters. His basic message, described by Simon Smith as an urgent need for humanity to reach 'a higher state of evolution as soon as possible',¹⁴ is repeated – replete with Theosophical underpinnings – by many current channels but where they vary is the diminishment of the necessity for a charismatic leader. Instead, many now suggest that the required psychic development necessary to become attuned to the correct vibrational frequencies through which to receive contact from alien consciousnesses is attainable by any human who follows a spiritual path. Certainly, this development can be traced to the individualistic spiritual seekership associated with New Age religious sensibilities but that does not mean that aspects of the content of King's messages do not resonate in current beliefs, although this chapter seeks to draw attention to the social and cultural context of contactee discourse.

King appeared on British national television a number of times and both discussed his experiences and appeared to receive channelled messages live on air. The first of these appearances, on *Lifeline* in 1959, consisted of King channelling a report from 'Mars Sector Six' and a discussion between King, a Cambridge astronomer, a Jungian psychologist and the host, psychiatrist Dr David Stafford-Clark. In his summing up of the programme, Stafford-Clark offered the home audience the following guidance: '[It] would be easy, foolish in fact, to deride Mr King [...] but what the Aetherius Society is really doing is expressing in a symbolic form the fears and anxieties that divide the world [...] The fear that our scientific advances have outrun our wisdom and our humanity in some respects, and that we are afraid it might outrun our very existence.'¹⁵ The argument being made here is not far removed from Stafford-King's closing remarks. The ongoing dislocation between scientific knowledge, its technologies and the instrumentalisation of our lifeworlds and our ability to represent and culturally reflect

the subsequent complex and rapidly changing nature of our social, technological, and cultural realities is the basis of differing versions of the crisis of postmodernity. In Lyotard, Baudrillard, Jameson, and Virilio our systems of representation are no longer capable of reflecting our realities to us – they become either concerned with their own self-referentiality or are simply outstripped by new media of communication.¹⁶ Thus, the primary mechanism through which modern societies had become accustomed to engaging with the cultural realm fails to provide a meaningful cultural response to this cultural context. **Here, we find the discursive spaces inhabited by more recent equivalents to Thompson's follower of Joanna Southcott.** When science, technology, culture, the economy, and society appear alien then the attraction of the alien motif as a means through which to make sense of one's position in the new cosmos becomes compelling. It is argued here that the cosmic consciousness appealed to and held up as an ideal is a socio-spiritual signifier of entry into a technologically transformed relationship with ourselves and the now-breached heavens.

Although much of what follows is concerned with an attempt to uplift human consciousness into an evolved form more fully oriented toward a global, technological future, it should be noted that there are those for whom such dramatic change comes at a cost. If there is a symbolic hope for a techno-utopia in the channelled messages, abductees reflect a fearfulness borne out of alienation and confusion. In 1964, whilst under hypnosis, Betty and Barney Hill 'recovered' memories of being abducted by aliens three years earlier. During their time on the alien craft the Hills claim to have been made the subjects of medical experimentation. This was physically invasive and traumatic. Betty Hill recounted having a range of tissue and fluid samples taken via the insertion of a large, needle-like instrument into her naval. Her husband, Barney, reported being anally probed and having his semen extracted. Initially they had no memory of their experience beyond a period of 'lost time' after having been pursued by bright lights whilst driving through the deep woods in the northern reaches of New Hampshire late at night on September 19, 1961. Having stopped their car to observe the lights first Betty and then Barney came to the conclusion that they were watching a craft of non-terrestrial origin. According to their account, it approached and they observed several uniformed humanoid figures who signalled to them. Fearful, they fled in their car but claimed to be unable to account for a period during which they drove over thirty miles save for memories of electric buzzing sounds at the start and end of that period.

In *The Interrupted Journey* (1966), the journalist John Fuller worked with the Hills and their psychotherapist Benjamin Simon to produce a narrative for those missing hours. Barney Hill had first visited Simon in December of 1963 seeking help for a generalised anxiety disorder and the disturbing, repetitive nightmares his wife was suffering from. It is only as their sessions continued that the importance to them of the abduction became clear. The relevance of the Hills here is not the entry into the hypnotic state. Writing in the preface to *The Interrupted Journey*, Simon is quite clear in his belief that hypnosis does not offer access to thought processes or content that would otherwise be unavailable to hypnotist or client: 'Under hypnosis, experiences buried in amnesia may be recalled in a much shorter time than in the normal course of the psychotherapeutic process. Nevertheless, there is little produced under or by hypnosis that is not possible without.'¹⁷ What is relevant is the state of mind that the Hills describe as being produced in them during their time on board the craft they described. According to the account he gave whilst under hypnosis, Barney Hill received telepathic communication from the aliens but unlike the dialogic contactees this caused him pain: 'Just stay there, he said. (*Now his voice breaks in extreme terror.*) It's pounding in my head!! (*He screams again.*) I gotta get away! I gotta get away from here!'¹⁸ Barney Hill went on to recount whilst under hypnosis how he was rendered helpless by the alien abductors, carried on to the UFO whilst in a state comparable to the hypnosis he was undergoing as part of his therapy. Whilst on board the alien ship he had a memory of being on an operating table with something cold cupping his groin. Once released from the flying saucer he recalled being full of relief and meeting Betty in the road, also in a state of happiness, 'Betty and I feel, I feel real hilarious, like a feeling of well-being and great relief [...] I am relieved because I feel like I've been in a harrowing situation, and there was nothing damaging or harmful about it'.¹⁹ Their experience became archetypal of the invasive abduction typically recounted by abductees. In both forced contact and dialogic contact the state of mind of the contactees is other. For the Hills it is repressed and hidden from the waking mind whilst for King and Adamski the experience brings spiritual wisdom and is the result of a heightened awareness. As was noted in the comments of his contemporaries, King's beliefs were treated as symbolic of an emergent social reality. Jodi Dean suggests that the Hills experiences – no less real for them – simultaneously carried a symbolic dimension that referred to a general theme in abduction accounts of alienation whilst also expressing the particularity of

their experiences as an ethnically mixed couple, Barney being African-American and Betty European-American. In her general account of anomic futurity, Dean points to the diminished sense of location, blurred accounts of spaceships and unknown stars, of being whisked off to an unknown place by an unknowable technology: 'Not only is alien technology invasive and incomprehensible, but virtually all technology is alien'.²⁰ For the Hills in particular, and subsequent narratives of human-alien hybridity, an implicit aspect of their account was the ongoing sense of dislocatedness and prejudice experienced primarily by Barney. Dean asks, 'Is it possible that his story escaped the confines of ufology because it commented on tensions around racial difference and mixed marriage in the United States during the 1960s, on the transgression of racial boundaries? Was it a way of thinking the unthinkable? Of using a stigmatized discourse to probe stigmatized practices?'²¹ Again, we find the hinterlands of accepted experience providing the discursive space in which social practices without representation in recorded culture are afforded expression.

Current contact and evolutionary consciousness

Lyssa Royal Holt and her extensive written and recorded archive provides a valuable means of understanding the alien contact experience as both process and belief system. Holt is a psychology graduate who grew up in the Northeast of the United States and her psychological training may well begin to explain her pragmatic approach to channelling. She does not present herself as the sole recipient of the aliens' message as did George King. Instead, she believes that the capacity to communicate with aliens is inborn in all humans and provides workshops that seek to train people to access it. She offers a variety of programs with an intensive course taught in Japan being the basis of all other sessions.²² At the time of writing, Holt was offering a three-day residential course in the US in September 2018 and a wider range of programs in Japan.²³ During these sessions students are taught by Holt and two extra-terrestrial consciousnesses that she channels, Sasha, a Pleiadian entity and Germane, a group consciousness. Although Holt's training sessions are commercial offerings²⁴ she has made publicly available an extensive archive of written materials in multiple translations via her website and hours of video teachings and interviews on her Youtube channel.²⁵ These are supplemented by three published books outlining her work and the message she claims to be channelling from extra-terrestrial entities and a pack of divinatory cards that are intended to aid their

user in accessing the higher aspect of consciousness that Holt describes as our evolutionary destiny. The books are: *Prism of Lyra: An Exploration of Human Galactic Heritage* (1989), *Visitors From Within: Extraterrestrial Encounters and Species Evolution* (1992), and *Preparing for Contact: A Metamorphosis of Consciousness* (1994); all three have been edited and updated with *Preparing for Contact* having being most recently expanded and revised in 2011. The divinatory cards are published under the title of *Galactic Heritage Cards*. They're based on *Prism of Lyra* but are intended as a supplementary tool for accessing cosmological consciousness. The cards depend upon Holt's description of the fragmentary nature of consciousness for what she claims to be their divinatory capabilities. After the Fall, in Holt's account, all current consciousness across the universe became separated from 'the Whole' and thus the Whole was fragmented into collective and individual consciousness. Nonetheless, all forms of identity – group and self – contain the memory of the Whole and thus Holt describes the holographic nature of consciousness. Essentially, she is using 'holographic' in a metaphorical rather than literal sense; she is suggesting that the fragment of unified consciousness we experience as our ego contains an untapped model of the expanded cosmic awareness that she suggests is the destiny of all sentience. On the basis of this, Holt describes the relationship between the card reader and what is to her the destiny of consciousness as unified and integrated with the cosmos: 'What happens to your connection to the hologram when you pick a card? An analogy can explain it. The hologram is spinning. When you pick a card, it is like tapping the spinning computer with your finger. A window pops out like on a computer. In that window, you see an aspect of yourself that is represented on that card.'²⁶

Certainly, the cards are a commercial endeavour and are one of many such divinatory tools available in the 'spiritual supermarket' that at once describes the eclecticism of belief and the commoditisation of religion that some associate with New Age religions.²⁷ To some sociologists of religion this signifies the waning of religion's affect and the primacy of the secular world; notably, Steve Bruce has discussed this in relation to New Age religious formations.²⁸ For Bruce, this commercialisation of religious practices devalues it and limits the opportunity for individuated consumer-believers to **effect** change in the world in the manner in which, say, Methodists did in nineteenth-century Britain. Nonetheless, as Guy Redden has subsequently pointed out, this overlooks the complex ways in which New Age beliefs are consumed as well as **the**

evidence that the social, political and civic engagement of New Age spiritual seekers is generally greater than their secular counterparts.²⁹ Moreover, as Paul Heelas suggests the embracement by believers of a holism that runs counter to the instrumentalism of late capitalism continues the 'romantic trajectory' of 'the qualitative versus the quantitative, the expansive versus the restrictive, the expressive versus the channelled, the priceless versus the philistine, the bloom versus the cage'.³⁰ That is not to say that Holt is engaged in any active campaign of resistance to corporate oligarchies, but her message of shared humanity and universalism does run counter to rising currents of populism and Trumpian calls to 'build a wall' – both real and symbolic. Holt's is a developing work and whilst there are other, earlier examples with a similar message she describes her role as a channel of alien consciousnesses as part of a (shared) responsibility to bring about an evolution in human consciousness. 'If we are to truly transform, it will be through the infusing of awareness onto our world, not using the awareness to escape from our responsibilities as citizens of Earth and the Galactic Family.'³¹

Holt's account of telepathic contact with alien intelligences from the Pleiades star cluster is remarkably similar to those of King. In each case the aliens who appear to, or speak through, the contactees are benign and seek to aid humanity's development as cosmic beings. The state of mind that allows perception of the aliens is a state of awareness that has integrated with the expanded cosmic consciousness that is typically described as humanity's evolutionary destiny – although it is worth considering this to be a spiritual evolution rather than a physical one. As in King's narrative this spiritual evolution fulfils a return to a cosmologically holistic state. Where Holt's differs is that the 'integrated consciousness'³² she describes which, in King's earlier versions, stemmed from a specialised and particular history of esoteric development, is more widespread and available in her version. Indeed, this wider consciousness shift is intrinsic to the messages that she claims to channel.

Although her contact with alien consciousness is benign, Holt recognises continuity between her experiences and those of the abductees. As noted in relation to the Hills' 'ur-abduction', the abductions were experienced only in retrospect, the shift in consciousness being so violent that at the time of abduction the experiencers were reduced to a near-catatonic state. Holt dedicated her second book to the abductees in the following way: 'To all humans who have allowed the abduction phenomenon to

touch their lives... Thank you for being humanity's pioneers on the evolutionary frontier.'³³ Essentially, Holt explains the abductions as being a mismatch between the abductees' undeveloped cosmic consciousness and the expanded awareness of unified consciousness held by the aliens. In a channelled conversation with the Zeta Reticulan Harone, it is suggested that the aliens' perception of the shared consciousness of higher lifeforms provides an implicit consent to abduction.

I'd like to open this conversation with a question. What is the nature of the agreement or permission perceived by the Zeta Reticuli that allows them to abduct, detain, and experiment with humans?

Harone: The nature is simple. We view your collective soul as being a part of ours and therefore by that unification, permission is granted.³⁴

Moreover, the abductions are presented as a necessary stage in humanity's entry into cosmic consciousness. Harone continues, 'Therefore, as a member of the universal races, it is our responsibility and also our gift to assist planets in their evolutionary steps'.³⁵ The aliens are, in effect, proselytising a literally universal teleology. Following the trauma of the abduction, humans adapt to and integrate the alien presence then, by acting on the guidance offered through the dialogic contacts, humanity becomes a fully-realised cosmic being. I have written elsewhere about the potential for reading expressions of human spirituality that focus on alien life and extra-terrestrial experiences as a response to the culture shock of becoming a space-faring species and this theme is continued in the discussion of Holt and her comparable channels.³⁶

Holt's cosmology follows the Paradise-Fall-Redemption (PFR) narrative structure of Christianity and is expressed in terms of seven 'densities' of being.³⁷ The densities are post-Fall states of being whose coming-into-being provide the basis of the Creation myth in Holt's cosmology. In Holt's account, the Fall is a falling away from a unified consciousness shared by all matter in the universe; human selfhood and ego are symptoms of this fall, a stage of (re-)ascension toward oneness with 'the Source'. Although the Source is the state of being to which all beings are oriented, Holt refers to the fragment of reality that humanity experiences as, 'the Whole, All That Is, or God'.³⁸ Holt is clear that the splitting of the Whole from the Source is analogous to the moment of creation – both in secular and religious constructs. In her rendering of the creation myth it is curiosity that stimulates the splitting of reality between the Source and the

Whole: 'The Whole's initial curiosity about a fragmented existence actually created the reality itself. It required a shift in perspective, focus, or frequency'.³⁹

In Holt's account, whilst the potential to access this consciousness is inborn it is seldom accessed. The majority of humanity exist in the 'third density' and await initiation into fourth density consciousness. Although it is an uncomfortable metaphor, consciousness density may be understood as the bandwidth of information that a being has available to it by which it understands its relation to the Whole.⁴⁰ Holt expresses this in terms of the rapidity of vibrations within a being's energy field and the higher number of vibrations equates to a higher level of 'density'. Thus humans (and other beings) who exist in the third density are conscious of their self and its relationship to a larger reality but perceive themselves as distinct from that reality. Each density corresponds to a state of consciousness defined in relationship to its degree of separation from the Source and represents a stage of evolution in a being's consciousness. Whilst each stage is a distinct level of consciousness, Holt suggests that movement through the densities is experienced as a continuum:

As a civilization's consciousness begins to evolve, they begin evolving from a 3rd-density perspective of [...] intense singularity [...] into what we call a 4th-density reality [...] this is a spectrum. So the metaphor there is the anchor that anchors the consciousness in singularity in 3rd density begins to get lighter and lighter and lighter.⁴¹

The first density is 'Awareness as a point; Physical matter [...] It provides the matter and energy for the creation of atoms and molecules'.⁴² Leibniz's monad is called to mind by the first density in the absoluteness of each monad's distinctiveness. The second density energy vibration is linear and is a consciousness shared by lower animals and other organic matter lacking self-awareness; beings in second density consciousness share a group identity that inhibits their connection to the holistic source. As stated, the majority of humans experience reality through third-density consciousness, Holt describes this as 'Volumetric awareness', characterised by, 'Ego; Loss of group identity, development of individual identity; Ability to remember past and cognize the future while retaining present awareness'.⁴³ The third density is therefore a dimension of consciousness defined through difference: self from others, this moment from other moments in linear time and so on. In Holt's system the content of conscious thought in third-density consciousness is never a true experience of the integrative nature of shared cosmic consciousness; the ego contains the possibility of consciousness of the

Whole but is constantly deflected from realising that possibility by the logic of difference that the ego requires. Like an organic intellectual, Holt builds a meaningful response to the condition of consciousness in the early twenty-first century but unlike Gramsci's figure she articulates not a focused, political will (say, hegemony or counter-hegemony) but a diffuse, intuited response to ongoing transformation of the pluralistic *Geist* (mind, spirit, culture). The polyvalency of the term in Hegel is useful in capturing the simultaneous realisation of multi-layered consciousness that Holt suggests is experienced in the fourth density of consciousness.

The fourth density and humanity's evolutionary consciousness

Holt summarises fourth density consciousness as 'Superconsciousness; Reintegration of group identity without loss of ego identity; As vibration increases, perception of past, present, and future become more fluid along with the ability to interface with multidimensional and multidensity realities'.⁴⁴ She describes fourth density consciousness as the final stage in embodied consciousness and that humanity and cetaceans are currently experiencing two overlapped realities, third and fourth density consciousness. It is Holt's belief that this marks the evolution of humanity (and whales and dolphins) into a higher level awareness of the Whole. As will be discussed below, Holt believes it is her mission and that of other channels of alien consciousness to encourage this transition from third to fourth density consciousness and to pass on the structures of thought that allow this awareness of integration to the cosmic Whole. In essence, to train others to open their minds to the higher density realities. There are three further non-corporeal consciousness densities in Holt's system, the fifth, sixth and seventh; Holt suggests that whilst all seven densities are on a continuum the first four levels are distinct due to altering perception of embodied being whereas the final three are much less distinct and blend into each other. The fifth density is characterised by wholeness: a singular, aggregate identity which is capable of manifesting in multiple moments, 'Experiential awareness of "I" as a group identity; Not bound by linear time'.⁴⁵ It is thus the ego transformed from that of the embodied consciousness to that of multiple awarenesses across time and space. In the penultimate sixth density, consciousness becomes the medium of experience, 'Awareness as the dimension itself'.⁴⁶ Holt characterises this as being best understood as 'Christ consciousness' in which, 'one begins taking responsibility for the Whole rather than the Self. The process

of progressing the Self and progressing the Whole become one and the same.⁴⁷ The continued influence of Theosophy is evident here.

Theosophy is also, more generally, evident in Holt's awareness of the holistic being that is encountered across the fourth to seventh densities. It is the expanded consciousness realised in the fourth density that allows access to that wider, plural sense of self, and this provides a gateway to the integrated plurality of the Whole. For Holt, gaining access to an awareness of shared consciousness, is the mechanism through which channellers are able to be contacted by, and communicate with, alien intelligences. In other words, by reducing the demands of the ego and attaining the openness to the fourth dimension's multiplicity of consciousness the evolving being gains access to the expanded evolutionary consciousness that Holt suggests is the cosmic destiny of all things. Holt casts newly aware channels of alien consciousness as functioning agents of consciousness evolution:

One of the reasons so many of us beings are here now, is to help guide you out of that hall of mirrors [...] where you're seeing your own polarization and your own fragmentation bouncing back at you. We're here to help guide you back from [the reflected fragments] and into the memory of your wholeness. When you go into the memory of your wholeness [...] when you experience that wholeness, you then experience the dissolution of the distracting energies that bind you to the 3rd density, physical, separative reality.⁴⁸

The alien beings are manifest in and through their channels and this shared consciousness is a consequence of the dissolution of the ego that Holt encourages as a step toward higher density awareness. Although highly organised within its own terms of reference, Holt's cosmology is recognisable in the context of dialogic contact and the theme of spiritual evolution as redemption is clearly not new. For Holt, the process is evolutionary with humanity growing in its ability to ascend the sevenfold dimensional scale she describes. In the PFR narrative structure this is the prelude to redemption and readmission into the extra-terrestrial universal. In *Prism of Lyra*, Holt described it thus, 'All consciousness and energy was once fused into an integrated whole. This Whole was aware of aspects of itself, but in a different way from individualized consciousness.'⁴⁹ Through the redemption of integrated consciousness, the Paradisiacal state of Wholeness is realised in the seventh vibrational density state. It is from this level of consciousness that the currents dictating connections joining minds transitioning from third to fourth density emanate. When a 'critical mass' of seventh dimension

consciousness is reached then the Whole will rejoin the Source and return through the 'Prism of Lyra' to engage with a new reality.

Although Holt's cosmology stresses the usual markers of New Age spirituality – holism married to a message of self-improvement – it is significantly distinct in the transcendence of ego. For instance, Heelas and also Farias and Lalljee⁵⁰ both point to the greater tendency toward individualism in New Age believers but in Holt individuality is an obstacle to achieving cosmic awareness. Indeed, the goal of spiritual development is to be re-absorbed into the Whole; an undifferentiated amalgamation of evolved consciousnesses akin to the Real in Lacan which is, ultimately, a return to a prelapsarian state. Nonetheless, as is common to a number of twentieth-century UFO spiritualities, the general themes of spiritual development and acquisition of an expanded universal consciousness following the guidance of hidden masters follow the structures of belief associated with Theosophy. As stated, the influence of Blavatsky's Theosophical Society on the New Age in general is well-documented. What is of use here is Theosophy's intention of integrating not only all world religions but also science in its belief system. This is a feature in Adamski's account and also one of the aims of the Aetherius Society. In Holt, the fate of the Zeta Reticulans, who used science to destroy their planet's ecosystem, is a cautionary tale about the misuses of science. However, science also offers redemption; she also recounts the importance of science in preserving their species and supporting their evolutionary journey to the Whole: "The first priority was to genetically alter the brain structures to affect emotional expression. They shunned their past expression of passion and chaos; they now wanted order. Their brains were thus altered to output a consistent chemical response to external stimuli. They achieved detachment from their ego structure. Over generations of neurochemical manipulations, the Apexians became a group mind."⁵¹

Benjamin Zeller suggests that one of the structural factors influencing the development of emergent religions is the increased prominence of institutional science: "The new religions served as harbingers of a dawning conversation on the relation of science to religion [...] religious groups had several methods of creatively responding to science, and the often-assumed conflict-based model of "science vs. religion" must be replaced by a more nuanced understanding of how religions operate in our modern scientific world."⁵² Again, the emergent religions are understood as a valuable indicator of developing but otherwise unexpressed cultural formations. Holt reflects this

observation of Zeller's but what is central to her channelled messages is the theme of integration, of overcoming difference and promoting a universal harmony. Certainly, there is nothing unique in this and her indebtedness to not only a diluted New Age Theosophy but also the contactee tradition is evident. What is notable is that, for Holt and her followers, this message of the need for an integrated species-consciousness, the Whole, continues to serve as a universal necessity for our collective development.

Conclusion

Although the comparison to Gramsci above was no more than a suggestive allusion that is not to say that a protean politics should not be looked for in Holt's thought. There is little in Holt's work that can be considered to be conspiracy theory but it belongs to the same order of knowledge that conspiracy theory does; Michael Barkun usefully describes the category as 'stigmatized knowledge'.⁵³ Although it is a commonplace of the literature that conspiracy theory has a political underpinning there is less acknowledgement of the political dimension present within New Age religions. Ward and Voas unpick the hybrid conspirato-political-spiritual form taken by David Icke's paranoid cosmology,⁵⁴ whilst Christopher Partridge and Andy Letcher both delineate the commingling of spirituality and eco-politics in the British occulture of the 1980s and 1990s.⁵⁵ More typical, though, is the dismissal of New Age spirituality as too individualistic to allow it to take a wider political form. As discussed above, Steve Bruce is representative of this position but there has been much work that suggests a more nuanced complexity in the political and social role of emergent religions. Indeed, this dismissiveness overlooks the political tendency present in the foundational beliefs that informed the New Age. B.J. Gibbons makes clear that the boundaries between the political and the spiritual are porous and frequently poorly defined. He writes:

The initial attraction of Theosophy for Besant, however, may have been that it provided a spirituality which entailed a radical social gospel. Helena Blavatsky herself had argued that Christ and the Buddha 'were ardent philanthropists and political altruists – preaching most unmistakably Socialism of the noblest and highest type'. If Besant's conversion to Theosophy led her to be less active in the socialist movement, this perhaps involved more a redirection than a diminution of her radical energies. After moving to India, Besant became increasingly active in Indian nationalist politics.⁵⁶

To be clear, Holt is not making any kind of reference to a socialist politics and the closest she comes to doing so is to use communism as a measure of repression: 'Think of [the

Orion Empire] as 1,000 times more repressive than communism'.⁵⁷ What has hopefully been shown by the preceding argument is that these notes from the cultural fringe offer insight into themes and structures of feeling⁵⁸ that have yet to come into the widespread vernacular of everyday culture. In articulating unresolved tensions within society they provide a semiosis of expression to felt but undefined cultural currents; her message is not new but the articulation of it in the pseudo-scientific context of holographic alien intelligences exemplifies a novel reformulation of it. In Holt's instance, she is articulating a holistic and universal reconciliation of fragmented and disparate races into an integrated whole in preparation for a journey into a new universe through 'the prism of Lyra'. Essentially, her paradisiacal future is organised around an evolved consciousness that embraces and recognises the Self in Others. It is not necessary to embrace her cosmology to recognise that this species goal may be no bad thing in these times.

Notes

¹ Raël (Claude Vorilhon) and George Adamski are notable examples of contactees who engaged in conversation with extra-terrestrial visitors to Earth.

² Lyssa Royal Holt has added 'Holt' to her surname during the 2010s but the majority of her published writing to date has been written under the name Lyssa Royal. Her current surname, 'Holt,' is used throughout the text to refer to her but Royal is used in the notes and bibliography for accuracy.

³ Catherine Wessinger, 'Millennialism in Cross-Cultural Perspective', in *The Oxford Handbook of Millennialism*, ed. Catherine Wessinger (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 4-5.

⁴ E.P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage, 1968 [1963]), 12.

⁵ Ronald Hutton, *Shamans: Siberian Spirituality and the Western Imagination* (London: Hambledon and London, 2001).

⁶ Andrew Fergus Wilson, 'Postcards from the Cosmos: Cosmic Spaces in Alternative Religion and Conspiracy Theories', *The Journal of Astrosociology* 2 (2017).

⁷ Arnold is credited with the first sighting of UFOs in 1947.

⁸ Alexander C.T. Geppert, 'Extraterrestrial encounters: UFOs, science and the quest for transcendence, 1947–1972', *History and Technology* 28, no.3 (2012): 335-362.

⁹ Don Lago, 'Messages from Space', *Michigan Quarterly Review* 54, no.1 (2015). Available from <http://hdl.handle.net/2027/spo.act2080.0054.108>.

¹⁰ Christopher Partridge, 'Understanding UFO religions and abduction spiritualities,' in *UFO Religions*, ed. Christopher Partridge (London: Routledge, 2003)

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 15.

¹² Simon G. Smith, 'Opening a channel to the stars: The origins and development of the Aetherius Society', in *UFO Religions*.

¹³ John Gordon Melton, 'Spiritualist, Psychic, and New Age Family', in *Encyclopedia of American Religions*, vol. 2, ed. John Gordon Melton, 3rd edn (New York: Triumph Books, 1991).

¹⁴ Smith, 'Opening a channel to the stars', 93.

¹⁵ Cited in David Clarke, *How UFOs Conquered the World: The History of a Modern Myth* (London: Aurum, 2015), 177.

¹⁶ Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, trans. Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984); Jean Baudrillard, *Simulacra and Simulation* trans. Sheila Glazer (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1994); Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or*

the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism (London: Verso, 1991); Paul Virilio, *Speed and Politics*, trans. Mark Polizzoti (New York: Semiotext(e), 1986).

¹⁷ Dr Benjamin Simon, 'Preface,' in John G. Fuller, *The Interrupted Journey: Two Lost Hours 'Aboard a Flying Saucer'* (New York: The Dial Press, 1966), ix.

¹⁸ Fuller, *The Interrupted Journey*, 94

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 128

²⁰ Jodi Dean, *Aliens in America: Conspiracy Cultures from Outer Space to Cyberspace* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 111.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 165.

²² Lyssa Royal Holt, 'Channeling Training', Home of the Lyssa Royal Material and Royal Priest Research, accessed Aug. 14, 2018, <http://www.lyssaroyal.net/channeling-training.html>.

²³ Lyssa Royal Holt, 'Schedule 2018,' Home of the Lyssa Royal Material and Royal Priest Research, accessed Aug. 14, 2018, <http://www.lyssaroyal.net/-schedule.html>.

²⁴ A 2018 US-based course taught over three modules charged \$395 per module. Lyssa Royal Holt, 'Channeling and Quantum Integration', Home of the Lyssa Royal Material and Royal Priest Research, accessed Aug. 14, 2018, <http://www.lyssaroyal.net/channel-training-usa-info.html>.

²⁵ Lyssa Royal Holt, 'SOLi School | Lyssa Royal Holt' Youtube Channel, accessed Aug. 16, 2018, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCeuLbnOjJBuFqqm2KEqkpLA>.

²⁶ Lyssa Royal Holt, *Galactic Heritage Cards: Card Meanings and Commentaries* (Flagstaff, Arizona: Light Technology Publishing, 2013), 23.

²⁷ Marion Bowman, 'Healing in the Spiritual Marketplace: Consumers, Courses and Credentialism', *Social Compass* 46, no.2 (1999): 181–189.

²⁸ Steve Bruce, 'The New Age and Secularization', in *Beyond New Age: Exploring Alternative Spirituality*, ed. Steven Sutcliffe and Marion Bowman (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000).

²⁹ Guy Redden, 'Revisiting the spiritual supermarket: does the commodification of spirituality necessarily devalue it?' *Culture and Religion* 17, no.2 (2016): 231-249.

³⁰ Paul Heelas, *Spiritualities of Life: New Age Romanticism and Consumptive Capitalism* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2008), 220. Of course, here, Heelas is referring to 'the channelled' as a dependency on received Earthly 'common sense'.

³¹ Lyssa Royal and Keith Priest, *The Prism of Lyra: An Exploration of Human Galactic Heritage* (Scottsdale, Arizona: Royal Priest Research Press, 1992), ix.

³² Lyssa Royal and Keith Priest, *Visitors From Within: Extraterrestrial Encounters and Species Evolution*, 2nd edn (Columbus, NC: Granite Publishing, 1999), 14.

³³ *Ibid.*, iii.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 46

³⁵ *Ibid.*

³⁶ Wilson, 'Postcards from the Cosmos: Cosmic Spaces in Alternative Religion and Conspiracy Theories'.

³⁷ See Royal, *The Prism of Lyra*. She outlines this in *Prism of Lyra* and continues to refer to it in her written and spoken word.

³⁸ Royal, *The Prism of Lyra*, 1.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 2

⁴⁰ Although uncomfortable the metaphor has some relevance here. In the preface to *Being with the Beings: The How and the Why of E.T. Contact*, Miguel Mendoza speaks of 'downloading' information from cosmic consciousnesses. This theme of advanced technology contributes to the improvised millennialism of much current channelling of alien consciousness.

⁴¹ Interviewed in Miguel Mendonca, *Being with the Beings: The How and Why of ET Contact* (N.p.: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2017), 39.

⁴² Royal, *The Prism of Lyra*, 4.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸ Mendonca, *Being with the Beings*, 49.

⁴⁹ Royal, *The Prism of Lyra*, 1.

⁵⁰ Paul Heelas, *The New Age Movement: The Celebration of the Self and the Sacralization of Modernity* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996) and Miguel Farias, Gordon Claridge, and Mansur Lalljee, 'Personality and Cognitive Predictors of New Age Practices and Beliefs', *Personality and Individual Differences* 39 (2005): 979-989.

⁵¹ Royal, *The Prism of Lyra*, 78.

⁵² Benjamin E. Zeller, *Prophets and Protons: New Religious Movements and Science in Late Twentieth-Century America* (New York: New York University Press, 2010), 170.

⁵³ Michael Barkun, *A Culture of Conspiracy: Apocalyptic Visions in Contemporary America*, 2nd edn (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press 2013).

⁵⁴ Charlotte Ward and David Voas, 'The Emergence of Conspirituality', *Journal of Contemporary Religion* 26, no.1 (2011): 37-41.

⁵⁵ Christopher Partridge, *The Re-Enchantment of the West Alternative Spiritualities, Sacralization, Popular Culture, and Occulture*, vol. 2 (London & New York: T & T Clark International, 2005); Andy Letcher, 'The Scouring of the Shire: Fairies, Trolls and Pixies in Eco-Protest Culture', *Folklore* 112, no.2 (2001): 147-161.

⁵⁶ B.J. Gibbons, *Spirituality and the Occult: From the Renaissance to the Modern Age* (London: Routledge, 2001), 124.

⁵⁷ Royal, *Galactic Heritage Cards*, 16.

⁵⁸ Cf. Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: OUP 1977).